THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Privatisation of catering services on Railways were announced in the Railway Budget 1991-92. As per Catering Policy issued on 06.01.1992, Railways decided that in future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and all the new units both static and mobile should be managed by licensees only.

In the Catering Policy 2000 and new Catering Policy 2004, it was reiterated as under:

"In future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and licensees should manage the services..."

(b) In order to upgrade, professionalise and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains and on other locations, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is being entrusted with the task of providing catering services on Indian Railways.

(c) Departmental catering units are being handed over to IRCTC along with staff on 'as is where is' basis and these staff will continue to serve in the IRCTC on deemed deputation with option to be exercised within three years either for absorption in IRCTC or for reversion back to the Railways. In the event of staff opting to revert to the railways they will be treated as surplus and dealt with as per rules. This has been envisaged mainly to ensure that the staff do not get the feeling that they have been forced to get absorbed in the IRCTC. The transfer of catering staff along with the activities is in accordance with the standard procedure prescribed by Govt. of India. Further upto the period of deemed deputation, maximum of three years, their seniority units will also remain unchanged.

Sky-Bus Metro Project

*256. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about the need for the sky-bus metro, a Konkan Railway Project, in the country which is considered to be safer, technically sound, eco-friendly and fitted with anti-pollution devices (SEDS) and also cost effective in comparison to underground and allevated metro rail;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to accord a green signal to this long standing demand for the project; and

(c) when the project is finally expected to start?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (c) At the level of Central Government, the subject of sky-bus metro is dealt by Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation which has constituted a committee in December 2003 under the Chairmanship of Shri E.V. Indiresan to examine the feasibility of establishing and operating sky bus metro service in Indian cities. The terms of reference of this committee are as under:

(i) To examine the techno-economic and financial feasibility of the sky bus metro system.

(ii) To ascertain the safety of the system.

(iii) To critically evaluate novel system component, such as suspended rail technology, traversing systems, etc.

(iv) To critically evaluate the integration of different technologies.

(v) Any other matter considered relevant by the Committee.

The issues regarding need for sky bus metro shall be examined only after the report of the above committee is received.

Kerosene distribution through PDS

*257. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that kerosene is distributed through fair price outlets under Public Distribution System to domestic consumers;

(b) the details of the scheme and number of families covered and volume distributed, year-wise since 1994-95;

(c) the details of the special scheme, if any, for consumers belonging to BPL category alongwith details thereof;

(d) the amount of subsidy involved per litre distributed in respective cateogry;